



An Analysis of Students' Anxiety in Learning English at SMP Negeri 20 Kupang in the Academic Year 2025/2026

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Article history Received : March, 12th 2026 Revised : April, 15th 2026 Accepted : May, 26th 2026 OPEN ACCESS	This study aims to investigate the types of anxiety experienced by the students, the factors that contribute to their anxiety, and the strategies they use to minimize it. The method used in this research is descriptive qualitative. The researcher uses the theories proposed by Horwitz and Cope (1986) to find out the types of students' anxiety, Ernawati and Fatma (2012) to find out the factors of students' anxiety, Kondo and Ying-Ling (2004) to find out the strategies used by the students to minimize their anxiety. Data were collected through a questionnaire adapted from the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) and semi-structured interviews with selected students. The data were analyzed using qualitative analysis procedures, including data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The researcher finds three types of anxiety, they are communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation. The dominant type is fear of negative evaluation. This research identifies several internal and external factors that contribute to students' anxiety in learning English. The internal factors include fear of making mistakes, lack of preparation, low self-confidence, and shyness. The external factors consist of limited vocabulary and friends/classmates. The most influential factor found in this research is fear of making mistakes. To minimize their anxiety, students apply several coping techniques, including preparation, concentration, relaxation, and positive thinking. Preparation is the most frequently used strategy.
Keywords:	<i>Anxiety, Factors, Strategies, Types</i>

1. Introduction

English plays an important role as an international language used for global communication. In Indonesia, English is taught as a foreign language starting from junior high school. Despite continuous efforts by the government to improve English education, many students still experience difficulties in learning English, particularly due to emotional factors such as anxiety.

Emotion significantly influences the learning process. Brown (1991) states that emotional factors affect learning fundamentally because they form the basis of learning strategies and techniques. Anxiety, as one of the affective factors, often becomes a major obstacle in foreign language learning. Ormrod (2011) defines anxiety as a feeling of uneasiness and apprehension toward uncertain outcomes. In the context of foreign language learning, anxiety can hinder students' participation, confidence, and performance.

Based on the researcher's teaching experience at SMP Negeri 20 Kupang, many students showed signs of anxiety during English lessons, such as reluctance to speak, fear of answering questions, and avoidance of classroom participation. This phenomenon indicates that anxiety may hinder students' engagement and learning outcomes in English classroom. Therefore, investigating students' anxiety is important to better understand the psychological barriers that affect language learning.

This study is significant because it provides insights into the types of anxiety experienced by students, the factors that contribute to their anxiety, and the strategies they use to minimize it. The findings are expected to contribute to the development of more effective teaching approaches and classroom practices that can help teachers create a supportive learning environment. In addition, this research may serve as a reference for future studies on foreign language anxiety and offer practical implications for improving students' confidence and participation in learning English.

2. Research Method

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design. The population consisted of all ninth-grade students of SMP Negeri 20 Kupang. The sample was class 9C, consisting of 27 students, selected through purposive sampling due to observable anxiety symptoms during English learning activities.

Data were collected using two instruments: a questionnaire and interviews. The questionnaire used was the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) developed by Horwitz et al. (1986), consisting of 33 items measuring communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 15 out of 27 students using purposive sampling based on the questionnaire result. The participants were selected from students who showed higher levels of anxiety in their

responses to the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS). These students were considered information-rich participants because their questionnaire results indicated significant experiences of language anxiety relevant to the focus of this study.

To analyze the data, this study applied qualitative data analysis techniques proposed by Sugiyono (2008). The data analysis process consisted of three steps: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The data from questionnaires and interviews were organized, categorized, and interpreted to answer the research questions.

3. Research Findings and Discussion

3.1 Research Findings

The findings of this study reveal that students experience different forms of anxiety in learning English. The results indicate three major types of anxiety as well as several contributing factors and coping strategies reported by the students. These findings are presented in the following sections, which discuss the types of students' anxiety, the factors contributing to their anxiety, and the strategies they use to minimize it.

3.1.1. The Types of Students' Anxiety

To identify the types of students' anxiety in learning English, this study adopted the theory proposed by Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986). Their theory categorizes foreign language anxiety into three main types: communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation. This theory was used to classify students' anxiety based on the results of the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS).

In this study, the researcher administered the FLCAS questionnaire developed by Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986). It consists of 33 statements. The researcher has divided the items of the questionnaire into 3 types namely, communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation based on FLCAS. The table below will show the results of students' answers based on the three types of anxiety:

Table 1: Students' Communication Apprehension

No	Questionnaire Item (summary)	Agree + Strongly Agree (%)
1.	I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in my foreign language class.	48%
2.	I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in language class.	74%
3.	I get upset when I don't understand what the teacher is correcting.	90%
4.	I get nervous when I don't understand every word the language teacher says.	74%

Table 2: Students' Test Anxiety

No	Questionnaire Item (summary)	Agree + Strongly Agree (%)
1.	I worry about the consequences of failing my foreign language class.	40%
2.	In language class, I can get so nervous I forget things I know.	44%
3.	I can feel my heart pounding when I am going to be called on in language class.	81%
4.	The more I study for a language test, the more confused I get.	18%

Table 3: Students' Fear of Negative Evaluation

No	Questionnaire Item (summary)	Agree + Strongly Agree (%)
1.	I keep thinking that the other students are better at languages than I am.	74%
2.	I am afraid that my language teacher is ready to correct every mistake I make.	81%
3.	I am afraid that the other students will laugh at me when I speak the foreign language.	44%
4.	I get nervous when the language teacher asks questions which I haven't prepared in advance.	93%

Based on the questionnaire results, three types of anxiety were identified: communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation. Among these three types, fear of negative evaluation emerged as the most dominant type of anxiety experienced by the students.

The data showed that most students felt nervous when they were asked to answer questions without prior preparation. A total of 63% of students agreed and 30% strongly agreed that they became nervous when the teacher asked unprepared questions. In addition, many students perceived that their classmates performed better in English than they did, indicating low self-confidence and strong sensitivity to peer evaluation. Furthermore, 44% of students agreed that they were afraid of being laughed at by their classmates when making mistakes while speaking English.

Communication apprehension was the second most dominant type of anxiety. The questionnaire data revealed that 75% of students agreed that they felt upset when they did not understand what the teacher was correcting. Additionally, 63% of students agreed that they felt nervous when they did not understand every word spoken by the teacher. Another significant finding showed that 52% of students agreed that they panicked when they had to

speak English without preparation. These findings indicate that students experienced anxiety mainly during oral communication activities in the classroom.

Test anxiety was also experienced by the students, although it was less dominant compared to the other types. The data indicated that 55% of students agreed that the more they studied for an English test, the more confused they became. Moreover, 41% of students agreed that their heart pounded when they were called on during class. However, 75% of students strongly disagreed with the statement that they often felt like not attending English class, suggesting that anxiety did not lead to avoidance of English learning.

3.1.2. The Factors that Cause Students' Anxiety in Learning English and the Strategies that Students Used to Minimize their Anxiety

In this section, the researcher analyzes and presents the results found by the researcher.

a) The Factors Contributing to Students' Anxiety in Learning English

To analyze the factors contributing to students' anxiety, this study used the theory proposed by Ernawati and Fatma (2012). According to their theory, factors influencing students' anxiety can be divided into internal factors (such as fear of making mistakes, lack of preparation, Shyness, lack of self-confidence, motivation, and lack of exposure) and external factors (such as limited vocabulary and Friends/Classmates). This theory helped categorize the factors obtained from interview data.

To find out the factors, the researcher conducted an interview with 15 students. The researcher asked students about the factors that cause their anxiety. The researcher shows the students' answer in the table below:

Table 4: Interview Data: Factors Contributing to Students' Anxiety

No	Category	Factors Identified	Number of Students
1.	Internal Factors	Fear of making mistakes	12
2.	Internal Factors	Lack of preparation	9
3.	Internal Factors	Lack of self-confidence	8
4.	Internal Factors	Shyness	6
5.	External Factors	Limited vocabulary	10
6.	External Factors	Classmates	7

The interview results revealed several factors contributing to students' anxiety in learning English. These factors were categorized into internal and external factors. Internal factors included fear of making mistakes, lack of preparation, low self-confidence, and shyness. Among these, fear of making mistakes was the most frequently mentioned factor. Many students stated that they were afraid of giving incorrect answers and being laughed at by

their classmates. Lack of preparation was another major factor, as students felt anxious when they did not study or complete assignments before class. External factors included limited vocabulary and the influence of friends or classmates. Students with limited vocabulary felt anxious because they did not know how to pronounce or express words correctly in English. In addition, fear of negative reactions from classmates also increased students' anxiety during speaking activities.

b) The Strategies Used by the Students to Minimize Their Anxiety in Learning English

To examine the strategies used by students to minimize their anxiety, this study adopted the theory proposed by Kondo and Ying-Ling (2004). Their theory explains various coping strategies for language anxiety, including preparation, relaxation, concentration, positive thinking and peer seeking, which were used as the framework to analyze students' anxiety-reduction strategies. The researcher shows the students' answer in the table below:

Table 5: Interview Data: Strategies Used to Minimize Anxiety

No	Strategy	Description	Number of Students
1.	Preparation	Studying before class, completing assignments	13
2.	Concentration	Focusing on teacher's explanation	9
3.	Relaxation	Taking deep breaths, calming oneself	7
4.	Positive Thinking	Ignoring negative thoughts and peer reactions	6

Regarding strategies to minimize anxiety, the interview data showed that students used several coping strategies, such as preparation, concentration, relaxation, and positive thinking. Preparation was the most frequently used strategy. Many students stated that studying before class, completing assignments, and understanding the lesson helped them feel more confident and less anxious. Other strategies included concentrating on the teacher's explanation, taking deep breaths before speaking, and trying to think positively by ignoring classmates' reactions.

3.2 Discussion

In this section, the researcher discusses three important results based on the data that has been found. First, the researcher discusses the types of anxiety that experience by students, second the researcher discusses about the factors contributing to students' anxiety, and the third the researcher discusses about the strategies that used by the students to minimize their anxiety.

The Types of Students' Anxiety in Learning English

The findings of this study reveal that students experienced three main types of anxiety in learning English: communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation. Among these types, fear of negative evaluation was found to be the most dominant. This result supports the theory proposed by Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986), who state that learners often feel anxious when they are worried about being judged negatively by teachers or peers. In this study, students' fear of making mistakes and being laughed at by classmates significantly affected their willingness to participate in classroom activities.

Communication apprehension was the second most dominant type of anxiety. Students tended to feel nervous when they were required to speak English without preparation or when they did not fully understand the teacher's explanation. This finding is consistent with Horwitz and Young (2011), who argue that communication apprehension occurs when learners lack confidence in their speaking and listening abilities. Limited vocabulary and unfamiliar pronunciation increased students' anxiety during oral communication.

Test anxiety was also experienced by the students, although it was less dominant compared to the other types. This indicates that students' anxiety was more strongly related to classroom interaction and oral performance rather than formal examinations. Most students still showed willingness to attend English classes, suggesting that anxiety did not lead to total avoidance of English learning.

Factors Contributing to Students' Anxiety in Learning English

The interview findings indicate that students' anxiety in learning English was influenced by both internal and external factors. However, internal factors appear to be more dominant in shaping students' emotional responses. This result can be interpreted through the framework of Foreign Language Anxiety proposed by Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986), which emphasizes that anxiety in language learning is closely related to learners' self-perceptions, beliefs, and feelings about their own abilities. Internal factors included fear of making mistakes, lack of preparation, low self-confidence, and shyness. Among these, fear of making mistakes emerged as the most influential factor. Students were afraid of giving incorrect answers and receiving negative responses from their classmates or teacher, which reduced their confidence to speak English in class.

The dominance of fear of making mistakes indicates that students tend to internalize negative expectations about their abilities. According to the theory of Language Anxiety, learners who constantly worry about errors often develop avoidance behaviors and reduced

willingness to communicate. In this study, many students preferred to remain silent rather than risk giving incorrect answers, showing how internal psychological barriers can limit active participation.

The stronger influence of internal factors compared to external ones may be explained by the nature of anxiety as a subjective emotional experience. While external factors such as limited vocabulary and peer reactions trigger anxiety, students' interpretations of these situations determine the intensity of their emotional responses. For example, two students with similar vocabulary limitations may experience different anxiety levels depending on their self-confidence and coping beliefs. This suggests that internal cognitive and emotional processes play a central role in amplifying or reducing anxiety.

Moreover, the classroom environment interacts with students' internal states. Fear of negative peer evaluation becomes more powerful when students already possess low self-confidence. In line with Language Anxiety theory, anxiety is not solely caused by external pressure but is constructed through the interaction between situational factors and learners' internal perceptions. Therefore, internal factors become more influential because they shape how students interpret and respond to external challenges in language learning.

The Strategies Used by the Students to Minimize Their Anxiety

The findings also show that students used several strategies to reduce their anxiety in learning English. These strategies included preparation, concentration, relaxation, and positive thinking. Preparation was identified as the most frequently used and effective strategy. These strategies align with Kondo and Ying-Ling's (2004) framework, which categorizes anxiety-reduction strategies as deliberate efforts to manage both psychological tension and performance demands in language learning.

Preparation functions as a cognitive strategy that reduces uncertainty and increases learners' sense of control. When students study the material before class, they build familiarity with vocabulary and concepts, which lowers the cognitive load during classroom interaction. From a psychological perspective, preparation enhances perceived competence and self-efficacy, two factors strongly associated with reduced anxiety. Students who feel prepared are more willing to participate because they anticipate fewer errors and negative evaluations.

Concentration operates as an attentional regulation strategy. By deliberately focusing on the teacher's explanation and classroom tasks, students minimize distracting thoughts related

to fear or self-doubt. Anxiety often interferes with working memory and information processing; therefore, sustained concentration helps students maintain task engagement and comprehension. This focused attention allows learners to respond more accurately and reduces the likelihood of panic during spontaneous communication.

Relaxation strategies, such as deep breathing, target the physiological symptoms of anxiety. These techniques help students regulate bodily reactions like trembling and rapid heartbeat, which are common during speaking activities. By calming their physical state, students can redirect their cognitive resources toward communication tasks. Relaxation thus serves as a bridge between emotional control and effective performance, enabling students to remain functional in stressful situations.

Positive thinking represents a cognitive reframing strategy in which students reinterpret mistakes as part of the learning process rather than as failures. This mindset reduces fear of negative evaluation and encourages risk-taking in communication. When students adopt constructive self-talk, they weaken the cycle of negative anticipation that fuels anxiety. As a result, they become more resilient and open to participation despite the possibility of making errors.

Together, these strategies demonstrate that students actively engage in self-regulation to cope with language anxiety. The effectiveness of these techniques lies in their combined impact on cognition, emotion, and behavior. By integrating preparation, attentional control, physiological regulation, and cognitive reframing, students create a multidimensional coping system that supports more confident participation in English learning activities.

4. Conclusion

This study concludes that students at SMP Negeri 20 Kupang experience English learning anxiety in the forms of communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation, with fear of negative evaluation emerging as the most dominant type. Students' anxiety is mainly influenced by internal factors such as fear of making mistakes, lack of preparation, shyness, and low self-confidence, as well as external factors including limited vocabulary and peer reactions. To cope with anxiety, students employ several strategies, namely preparation, concentration, relaxation, and positive thinking, with preparation identified as the most frequently used strategy.

Although this study provides in-depth insights into students' anxiety and coping strategies, several research gaps remain. First, this study focuses on a limited number of participants within a single classroom context, which may not fully represent the diversity of anxiety experiences in different educational settings. Second, the study emphasizes students' perspectives but does not extensively explore teachers' roles or instructional practices in managing classroom anxiety. In addition, the research mainly relies on qualitative data, leaving opportunities for future studies to integrate quantitative measurements or experimental approaches to examine the effectiveness of specific anxiety-reduction interventions.

Future researchers are encouraged to investigate language anxiety across different schools, age groups, or educational levels to obtain broader comparative perspectives. Further studies could also examine teachers' strategies and classroom practices that influence students' emotional experiences. Moreover, experimental or mixed-method research designs may be used to test the impact of structured intervention programs on reducing students' anxiety. By addressing these gaps, future research can contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of language anxiety and support the development of more effective pedagogical approaches

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